

wound but rejoicing in his escape from death. The general nodded pleasantly.

"General Sarrain," he said, "my compliments to the army and to you. Enjoin every man of the staff to observe redoubled precautions against permitting one item of our plans to become the property of our enemies!"

For three days it was thus. A short report of progress from his second in command, a quick, businesslike conversation with the thorough and kindly Sister Regina, an examination of his wound three times a day from the surgeon, during which he caught thrilling glimpses of light in his one eye.

"Careful, sir," the head surgeon would say. "Do not open the right eye. If it is bared to the light within two weeks you will lose it also. The eye, my general, is the most sensitive creation of God's; it is also like an artillery horse, sir—if its teammate is killed it will lie down and die from sympathy unless handled with extreme care."

On the fourth day the general opened his eyes, if one may say so, in the morning to feel a strange new course of blood stirring his body. Instantly he knew. Sister Marcelle was resting a hand on his arm.

"Flower of the Night!" the general said.

"Bravo, my general," she said, and her young voice made his pulse leap still higher. "But how did you know, sir?"

"No man may be so old that he cannot remember your hand," he answered.

"Such an honor overpowers me, my general," the girl's voice said. "I am blessed in being thus able to serve my country brilliantly in nursing you. Sister Regina was killed last night. A sniper firing through a window put a bullet in her sainted heart. I as directing nurse will now care for you, sir."

"The will of God," said the general, spreading his palm upward, but down in his heart, long injured to death, he was not sad. Fate had brought him the thing he was too much a soldier to ask for.

Instantly he repented.

"But, sister," he said, "you are more

What was it? The girl was oblivious to everything except something that made her propel her rocking chair to and fro.

to a hundred men below than to any one man. Sister Regina told me many times of how the men adored you. I cannot take from them the flower of their night, even though night itself is on me, too."

"I will pass through the wards as of old," she replied, "but my one duty now is to be eyes to my general, to see that he lacks nothing against a speedy return to the great attack."

Her hand caressed his arm, his shoulder, his cheek. He was speechless under its charm. Was there something more than a nurse's compassion in that caress?

* * *

HE LAY wondering upon this as he listened to her working in the room, straightening the little table that stood near by, clinking the bottles, tearing bandages.

When General Sarrain was announced a little later she left the room, and he realized what a little patriot she was, knowing the secret which even the loyal inferior must show in the presence of secrets which commanded the fate of the allied cause.

From his officer he learned that the plans were complete. General Sarrain read to him the official code commands sent out from headquarters. On the 15th, one week away, the grand assault was to come. It was to be a surprise, unprecedented by artillery. The British were to attack at midnight, the French farther eastward fifteen minutes later, and the Americans in the extreme east fifteen minutes after that, so that from Flanders to the country of Jeanne d'Arc the Huns were to be overwhelmed by infantry, tanks, cavalry, airplanes, artillery

—everything.

The boche knew something was coming, but where, when and how much he did not know, as was evidenced by the activities of his spies, scores of whom the allies were capturing daily.

The general's body twirled as he shifted to be in uniform. He commanded

the surgeon when he came an hour later to have him cured in a week, and when that officious man laughed in his handling of the dressings and ordered him to lie motionless for three weeks the general swore excitedly. But there was nothing to do against a doctor, he remembered, and turned with a shameful feeling of delight to thoughts of Sister Marcelle.

He found himself constantly maneuvering to require additional attentions from her. He talked to her constantly. How wise she was; how oddly she understood that talking helped him. How much better a woman comprehended men than did surgeons, who commanded them to be as silent as possible.

"Flower of the Night" was gay. She had a voice like chimes heard across the lowlands at dusk, and her hand was like the even night wind itself. When she talked of her love for "my general" impulses and hopes tumbled in the old man's bosom, hopes that he labeled "insane" when she was silent again. Never could he keep that conviction down that she really loved him. Something insisted it, something kept clamoring over and over, "She speaks frankly and innocently to utter that which she fears to say in earnest. She is saying she loves you as her leader, but she says it only because she loves you as a man."

Two days passed. At night she sat beside him, tearing bandages, rocking slowly in the chair at his right hand. By degrees he came to know how she looked as she sat there. A small girl of 20, round and slim. She was facing him, rocking to and fro, working as they talked. At her left was the window, at her right close to her head the yellow-shaded electric lamp. Down across the window hung at night a thick curtain, to keep the lamp rays from drawing some sniper's bullet. As he listened to her voice, telling of her convent life, of her travels with her father, a rich manufacturer of

Paris; of her home, the general felt that here indeed was the woman who should have been his wife in the long years that were gone. Why had no woman like her come across his youth or his middle age? Perhaps old age brought a true insight into woman that younger years never knew. Would a boy note the beauty of a woman in the lamplight rocking?

He thought much; that is, he imagined he was thinking much. In reality he was in love and thinking nothing, only feeling much.

Little by little he told her of his life. Her passion for the army warmed him. He had seen the great war from the beginning, and been part of it. He could hear that she had stopped rending bandages when he told her of the fights and the crises of battle and politics in the five years of warfare that had gone.

She sobbed aloud. The sound of her chair rocking stopped. He raised himself on his elbow.

"What is it, my little one?" he asked.

"France has bled and is bleeding," she said, murmuring the words through tears. "And I am a girl. Could not the good Lord have made me a man—not a strong young polli, but such a one as you, my general, wise and strong, directing, planning, braving the dangers of the polli but seeing everything in the sky as well. How strong, how godlike!" she sobbed.

HE had risen, the general knew. He swept out his arm and closed it about her hips. She fell loosely within its hollow. Her lips found his, groping. New tides of life were pounding in the general's veins. His lips strayed over her face, gravitating always back to her mouth. His hands, fumbling within her Red Cross cap, stroked her hair.

He was the first to speak.

"It is a dream," she said, "to lie in the arms of my general."

"It is paradise," he said.

War is the exaggerator, not the creator. It produces nothing new, not even when it engenders love. These lovers were quite as lovers in fields or on the

looked, and saw. Thereafter, as was natural, perhaps, his eyes turned often to the optical department. And where his eyes turned, there his feet led him.

One night they went to dinner and the theater. And Miss Blake told him of her home, up in Maine—of the baby lamb that they were raising on a bottle because of its orphaned state, and of many other things simple and sweet. And she told him of her first days in the store, before she had risen to her present proud position. Those were sad days, when one had to live on \$5 a week—days when one did one's own washing, and scrimped, and gazed out of one's small window over the city and wondered if the end would make it all worth while.

* * *

MR. VAN REYPLAN, listening, realized for the first time where the Meredith millions came from, and recalled, with a pang, that the \$5-a-week year was his junior year at Yale, when he had bought the imported touring car. Which led, easily, to the thought that there was much he owed this wistful-eyed little girl—a thought that moved him to invite her again—and then again.

As Mr. Van Reypen devoted more and more time to paying this one small debt that the Meredith millions owed he was startled to find himself taking a keen pleasure in doing so. The girl's wit was quick, her appreciation of Mr. Van Reypen's wit even quicker. And in her eyes, which were very soft, there shone the light of an affection she could not conceal. Which light was all the more pleasant to Mr. Van Reypen in that she knew nothing of his connection with the Meredith who owned the store.

So subtly, but surely, Bishop Van Reypen, late set of far-off drawing-rooms, fell under the spell of a fair little girl who worked for her livelihood in a store. Meetings with Sandy Trotter only strengthened the chains. For Sandy had married; he married in from Jersey each morning and out each night, and he painted in characteristically vivid terms the joys of the married life. So Mr. Van Reypen drifted on, and the broad-shouldered young man in the shipping department, who used occasionally to enjoy

Miss Blake's favor, saw slipping from him the desire of his life.

One evening Mr. Van Reypen said good-by to Miss Blake at the door of her boarding-house, and standing there in the moonlight that had found its way even into so mean a street, she looked so little and fair, and altogether so desirable, that he was moved to take her in his arms. At that moment, however, she turned away, and as Mr. Van Reypen stood looking up, almost worshipful, he told himself that this should be his mate in the new life he had chosen. Here, he reflected, walking back to his rooms, was a sweet faith, and affection more than social glory. Both were his for the asking.

"Tomorrow," he said to himself, "I shall ask."

But on the morrow came two letters, and their postmark was the postmark of Japan. Closeted in his narrow office, which was close beside the optical department, Mr. Van Reypen broke their seals. One was from the little brown boy, his protege; and it was a letter of joy. At last that waif of the Orient wrote in "vigorous and triumphant mood of heart." He had been promoted. Glorious was the news. "Come to Japan twice, my benefactor," he begged.

And the plea in the second was much the same. Mr. Van Reypen started as he saw the familiar hand. He turned hastily to the signature, "Margaret Jamieson." She had not married Norris. The engagement was broken. She wrote golden words of blossom time in that colorful country, and through them all ran subtly the plea of Yone Taisuke, this time unvoiced: "Come to Japan twice."

Late into the afternoon, and then until long after dusk, Bishop Van Reypen sat and pondered. The letter from the brown-eyed girl in far Japan brought it all back—the musical tinkle of the temple bells, the narrow, picture-postcard streets, the life of luxury and ease, the balls, the dianers, where he had shone. What Mr. Meredith had called the "blue-exquisite blood" in him ran faster at the thought. He walked again with the dainty Margaret Jamieson down make-believe thoroughfares; he sat again with her on the Maxwell balcony, while the

moonlight fell silver on the roof tiles. Land of the lotus, where life was a dream of delight, and where little people, who rightfully belonged only on fans, appeared like genii to attend to every want. Should he go back?

Here the drab gray of life in this great, monotonous store—the steady round of homely duties. And here, too, the wistful-eyed little girl who looked at him so wonderfully. Would it be fair to her? But was it her future, or his own, that he must consider now? She would be unhappy for a time, but she would forget. And over there—Should he go back?

Mr. Van Reypen fumbled the letters and gazed out of his door at the great store, now nearly deserted. He drew note paper toward him and wrote: "My dear Margaret." There he paused. Was ever man so perplexed? The old love of luxury, the fondness for things he had not earned for himself—but was that a man's game? And here was the clever little girl, to whom he had so surely allowed himself to become all in all. Still, across seas was the life of pleasure and gaiety, the life he was made for, as surely.

A voice rose from the other side of the partition—a voice from the optical department. It was the voice of the young man from the shipping-room, and it was strong and booming, for he was in no mood to make it soft and tender:

"It's him or me. You got to decide between us—now. I told you how I love you, but if you prefer him, why—all right. Only I want to know. If it's him—then I'm going away—I'm going to be a sailor. I couldn't stand it here any longer. I'd go away an' see the world—a sailor."

* * *

THE voice paused. There was no reply.

"It's him or me," persisted the rather tactless young man from the shipping department. "You got to decide right away. I want you—I love you. You know that. But I won't play second fiddle any longer. If it's him—I'm going to be a sailor."

And thus, sharp and clear, Mr. Van Reypen heard again the call—the old call—the call he had answered so often in

distant Japan; the call of his country. The resolute look of days forgot lit in his eyes. He stood up. This time there was no need to don a dress suit—no need to dine, to waltz, even to pass a tea cup. He recalled a gray-haired admiral, and certain words spoken on a balcony in Japan:

"Yes, sir, the navy has need of strong, decent young men. It has sore need of them—of good Americans, sir."

So Mr. Van Reypen threw into a basket a scrap of note paper and stepped outside, whither again his country called him.

"I beg your pardon," he said in his customary well-bred voice. "Are you ready, Katherine? You're going to walk home with me tonight, you know."

"See here," said the prospective sailor. "I won't have you butting in—"

"Perhaps," remarked Mr. Van Reypen, "it would be just as well to let the world know, dear." He turned to the red-faced youth. "Miss Blake has promised to become my wife, you know."

"Oh," said the young man from the shipping department. Only that. And he moved away. Mr. Van Reypen hurried to the side of the girl, who sat blushing at her desk.

And now let us be quite fair to Mr. Van Reypen. He stood for an instant looking down at the blushing girl, and the thing in his eyes was not altogether patriotism. There was something else there—a something hard to express. Yone Taisuke can best supply the words. There was a light in his eyes that reflected, beyond any doubt, a "vigorous and triumphant mood of heart."

"Was I right?" whispered Mr. Van Reypen. "Oh, my dearest—was I right?"

And the little girl at the desk, looking up, saw and recognized the light; and smiled happily out of her own startled eyes.

"I—I guess you were," she said.

Far away they could see the broad shoulders of the young man from the shipping department, who was moving on—moving on into the great world beyond the store—moving on to be a sailor. Thus Mr. Bishop Van Reypen served his country, even in matters of love.

FLOWER OF THE NIGHT

By Lloyd D. Lewis

Illustrated by M. D. Smith



HEN the general was led into the hospital, his face a red smear, the woman upon whom his remaining eye first fell was Sister Marcelle. In spite of his twitching nerves, jangled yet

from the shell's shock, and in spite of the scarlet haze that danced before that eye which escaped the fate of its fellow, he was conscious of her beauty as only an old man can be conscious of a woman's youth.

Other nurses came running, for he was in command of the Eleventh army, whose wounded they tended, but the general saw them only as so many figures in white.

She whom the orderly had called Sister Marcelle was all that his dazed mind could fix upon. Of the many hands that touched him, caressing, guiding as he was brought to the cot, he felt only one—this girl's.

Afterward, while the surgeons were preparing to operate on his mangled eye, his mind, trained in thirty years' military routine and five years' intensive battle grind, returned little by little to the thing he lived on, breaking the Hindenburg line. His only regret at being wounded was that it would rob the army of his direction in the two weeks that remained before the supreme attack.

He wondered if he would die. Wounds in the head were dangerous, and the eye socket offered too easy access to shrapnel that buried the brain.

The strange and fascinating story of a great war secret, a blind general, a beautiful Red Cross nurse and—a rocking chair

Secret! but his head ached. Would General Sarrain, second in command, be able to manage the assault? Could his staff keep out the spies who were risking everything now to discover the day and the spot where the great attack of the allies was to fall.

Questions went through his mind like wild birds flocking to some unknown far-distant haven in the night.

* * *

BUT as the cone of ether went over his face he fell easily to thinking of the girl who had taken his wrist as his men supported him up the steps. How cool and young her hand had been on the hot, withered flesh of his wrists. He must ask for her when he came out of this sleep. How small—red haze—hid—her—must see her again.

When he came out of the drug's spell it was to total blackness. He raised a hand.

"What is it, my general?" a woman's voice said. "Do not move!"

The general lay quiet, collecting his thoughts, trying to remember.

"You are in the hospital, sir, where they brought you after the shell struck you down. Hospital No. 3, immediately behind the lines."

"Am—ah—am I blind?" he asked.

"Your eyes are yet bandaged. One is gone forever in that shell burst; the other must be kept bandaged for a week, then you may, God willing, see enough with it to conquer any two eyes in bohemia."

For a time the general lay without speaking. He recalled everything. Sister Marcelle! This voice was not hers.

Then he checked himself. Foolish for a man past 50, married to his sword, to suddenly fall to thinking with sentiment of a nurse! A nurse to whom he had never spoken.

"What of the army?" he said aloud.

"Please say nothing, sir," replied the nurse. "General Sarrain has taken charge in your absence; all goes well. Do not ponder over it, my general. Your recovery depends upon your silence."

Later the woman, describing herself as the directing nurse of the hospital, Sister Regina, told him of the hospital where he lay, seeking to picture every fact for him, so that he might not perplex himself with unanswered queries.

This was hospital No. 3, within a mile of the first line trenches. The general lay in the second story alone in a room where none might intrude. There was small

danger of bombardment from air craft, since the building lay half underground and magnificently camouflaged.

The general himself was to lie quietly and hear twice a day the reports of General Sarrain. After tomorrow he could speak. Sister Regina herself would nurse him. He was not to object to this, for the other wounded men would not suffer. Sister Marcelle, second in command, would direct efficiently.

At hearing that name again—Sister Marcelle—the general moved as though to speak. Whereupon Sister Regina, having, like all trained nurses of experience, an uncanny power of divination in the matter of men's unspoken wishes, said:

"You have heard of Sister Marcelle? Perhaps some returning officer mentioned her name. Very famous she is with the brave poilus who pass through. 'Flower of the Night' they call her, and indeed she does seem to bloom and shed bright fragrance to the men who are lying in that darkness of soul which the wounded know. Now, my general, you must sleep. I will sit beside you constantly."

* * *

THE general's mind dwelt for a time on the "Flower of the Night," then as his normal habits of thought began to reassert themselves he dismissed this subject with a concluding observation that a wounded man was a fool, particularly when he was 50.

The next day he was allowed to speak with General Sarrain. The world seemed much brighter. The plans for the great attack were proceeding on schedule. The army was grief-stricken at the general's

gandan. A general of France says to the war nurse "It is paradise" exactly as the plowboy breathes it into the ear of the milkman's daughter. The language of love is trite wherever it is real.

"You must not," she said, and slipping from his arm returned to her chair, where she began to rock to and fro again, reading bandages.

"Do not think of a simple girl's love for you, my general. Think of France. Your mind must plan for the great day, sir. Please, my general."

"So great a love for me she has," the general thought, "that she would give even it for France."

* * *

THE sound of the rockers of her chair going back and forth slowly was music to him, strains of peace, of home, of woman's love, and to its placid rhythm he told the listening girl of her country's plight, of his great plan to save it, so that rocking chairs in every home might go to and fro in the lamplight and peace be everywhere.

Once she interrupted him.

"When I think, my general, of how much France needs your return, how much she needs your mind, I tremble for fear. Might not some sharpshooter's bullet penetrate this window even as the one that killed Sister Regina? My heart would break; that is not much, but my country's heart, it must beat on!"

He heard her arise and readjust the heavy curtain, fingering it carefully.

"Now no pinpoint of light shines out," she said, and fell to rocking again.

The general took up the thread of his plan again. For an hour he talked. The girl's gasps of sympathy, of admiration, her sobs when he told of the thousands of men who would die on the morning of the 15th on the parapets from the Channel to Switzerland, all warmed him and reminded him of her devotion. Under his own voice and under her exclamations he listened to the contented murmur of the rocking chair. What a symbol it was to man of camps and fields!

Sometimes it rocked rapidly, sometimes slowly, and because this showed the girl's excitement and love, her spell under his story, he took an orator's pride in thus being the author of its irregularity.

He stopped. He was overtaxing her emotions picturing to her the glorious picture of how France and her allies would end the long war. Her heart was too simple, too tender to be strained with such exalted emotions—and with love. So he fell silent, and lying quietly on his pillow listened to her chair. The sound of the rockers lulled him. Dimly he counted their movements to and fro. Poor girl, she was still perturbed, for she rocked with the same irregularity, now slow and now quick, now stopping for a moment altogether. The rippling noise of the linen she rent went on steadily.

The memory of the perfume of her skin when it had touched his lips made him furious at the bandage which hid her from him. He must see her, if but for a moment. It was absurdly easy to slip the bandage down and peep for a second at her. He had never had a woman who loved him rocking in sweet tranquillity beside him.

Perhaps it is the lingering association from babyhood days, when mothers sat rocking cradles, that makes men, particularly wandering men, stir so at the sight and sound of a woman rocking in the lamplight of a home.

The general debated with himself. The surgeon was probably like all surgeons, exaggerating in prophesying blindness should the general's one eye see light for weeks. Surely one shadowed glimpse at the woman he loved would not hurt it!

Slowly he shifted to his side, facing her. He threw his left arm carelessly over the bandage. Should he risk it? There were tears in her eyes, sweet emotion on her face, he knew, for the sound of the rockers still betrayed her agitation—one quick-one-quick—one slow-stop. One slow-on and on.

Imperceptibly his arm, pressing hard

against the top of the bandage, slipped down. He could feel the bandage working down over his brow. A faint glint of light dawned. It grew brighter. His eye pained horribly. He kept his arm closely pressed against it.

He raised the upper lid gingerly. A stab of white heat seemed to run the ball through. He opened it still more, keeping off the full rays with his arm.

Gradually the vague white form moving to and fro slightly began to take form. His breath was hot and fast on his arm. Slowly the girl came into focus.

She was more beautiful than he had imagined, more serene, more controlled. Only that jerky, unsteady rocking betrayed how violently her heart was desiring him, her general. She was very young.

The picture she had described to him was exact. She was sitting between the lamp and the window, her wide-winged cap casting a deep shadow across the window. The general's eye roamed about the bare little room.

Suddenly he realized that the window curtains were open. Flower of the Night had closed them more tightly only a few minutes before. Across the curtained window the shadow of her head was moving, keeping time to her rocking. The general looked back at her face. It was bent over her work, but her lips were moving slightly, and now and then her eyes strained and cunningly strayed sidelong to the window.

* * *

WHAT was it? The general realized the girl was oblivious to him, to everything except something that made her propel her rocking chair to and fro in that odd, jerky rhythm.

He watched the window, listening to the sound of the rockers. When Flower of the Night halted, making the "stop" sound that he had listened to so long, her shadow covered the window pane entirely; when she rocked "one-quick," a short flood of light illuminated it for a second

before her hand covered it. When the rockers went slow, the light streamed onto the pane for a longer period.

By degrees the general saw that the short flashes were of equal length, that the slow gleams were of equal length, and that the stops were similarly held.

Another stab of white-hot pain went through his eye. Red flashes danced in front of it. Bursts of flame seemed to whirr inside it.

"Flower of the Night," he said very low, "my bandage has slipped down."

She gave a gasp that might have been fear, then turning it into a tender exclamation of love, she rose and bent over him.

Her face was close above his. It was a white blur, streaked with whirling red and blue lights. But he held his eye upon her. His hands caught her shoulders and drew her down upon the bed.

"Flower of the Night," he said, "long ago, before I was the general that you love for his strength and power, I was an engineer in the Army of the Republic, and there I learned the meaning of as simple a thing as the Morse code."

The girl screamed faintly and struggled back, but the general's arms pinned her down.

"Where is your confederate outside?" he said quietly.

Flower of the Night choked and made no answer. She wormed nearer to him. The perfume of her skin streaked across the general's senses.

"My general!" she pleaded. "I love you! I am not guilty! I—

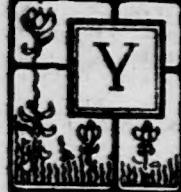
"You shot Sister Regina to bring your self near me!" he shouted.

His fingers were in her white neck and he pulled her face closer, striving to see. The blurred eyes was but a mist of white. He could not tell where in this mist his beautiful face stood.

He kept looking desperately for it, striving to see it, long after the throat in his hands was cold and the light in his eye gone into solid blackness.

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THE ELEVATOR



OU never can tell. We thought our office was keyed up to a high pitch before she arrived. We looked upon the old man—the boss—as one of the topers. He discharged one very nice girl for putting powder on the end of a very nice nose during a hot day when we all thought her justified in her plea:

"But, Mr. Bunker, no girl likes to have her nose look shiny!"

He also rebuked one of our most skilled bookkeepers for saying, "Damn that b—t!" though it was his first offense; and our employer was (we understood) prominent in various benevolent and church organizations.

Yet when The Elevator was installed we began to wonder whether we had not been leading an unreformed and unregenerate existence, even under the old man's strict regime. If he approached the limit, she lapped over its edges.

The Elevator was the nickname given her by the office boy, Jimmy Grieron, after her first two days as Mr. Bunker's private secretary and stenographer. We of the outside offices thought her a very nice looking addition to the force, but Jimmy, who ran in and out of the boss' private room, was the first to know anything definite about her, and his reports grew worse, and worse, as time elapsed.

I believe he offered her some chewing gum, only to be told that she "certainly would in no way countenance a habit so contrary to good breeding!" Then I, as chief clerk, told her that I hoped she would enjoy the work in our office; and was reminded that "work must not be shewed from the standpoint of enjoy-

The Elevator had a good heart after all, though she had it successfully concealed from the office force until after the clean-up

ment, but from that of its value to the welfare of others and its opportunity for self-discipline." Whereupon I remarked:

"Yes, indeed, Miss Tomlin; you're right, of course," and retired to my own corner, lost in thought.

At the end of the second day Jimmy came out of the inner office wearing the expression of Raphael's southwest cherub, and reported to my desk that Miss Tomlin was going "to elevate the tone of the office."

"How do you mean?" I asked uneasily.

* * *

SHE'S requested that old Bunker should fire these out," and Jimmy produced from under his arm some calendars containing pictures of attractive young ladies. "She said she'd like to have some pictures 'of a higher moral tone,'" observed Jimmy. "And the boss fell for it."

"What did he say?"

"He highly commended her most praiseworthy effort," Jimmy answered. "He did, for a fact—in those very words, and he is going to get some new junk—'Milly's Angels'?" I inquired.

"Sure—I guess so. And she said she thought it would 'elevate the tone of the office.' So we're in for it, Mr. Waller; you might as well prepare yourself for the elevator."

That's the way Miss Tomlin got her nickname, and she certainly lived up to it. One day I was called in to see the old man, and after some little awkwardness

he politely gave me to understand that he would appreciate it if I would not "give myself quite the latitude I did in regard to garish neckties!"

"Of course, it's a matter of personal taste, Mr. Waller," he said seriously, "and one in which an employer can hardly do more than suggest. But we" (this was a slip he didn't notice) "believe that the whole office should give an impression of the highest tone, even in small matters; for these things speak of the life within—and the public gets its idea— and so on till I lost the drift."

"All right, sir," I said. "This was a present from my Cousin Harriet, and she doesn't quite suit my taste in ties, anyway. I'll chuck it."

"Thank you," said Mr. Bunker. "If you will discard it—"

"Abandon!" suggested Miss Tomlin. "Much better," agreed the old man. "If you will abandon extravagant hues it will be highly approved, Mr. Waller. We must set a high standard for ourselves!"

"Certainly," I agreed, and withdrew, keeping my temper till I was outside the door—when I made some subdued remarks that would have evoked shrieks from The Elevator.

So it went on. Loud talking was "neither businesslike nor refined." The ink bottles had to shine like the copper kettle of a Dutch housewife. If you did not have your boots polished you were a pariah. Three minutes' tardiness was a

From being a pleasant place to work the office gradually improved until it was as homelike as an old-fashioned New England parlor, kept for funerals and such really enjoyable affairs. I didn't mind it so very much myself, for I did my cussing under my breath, but I was sorry for Jean Nibet, the other stenographer.

Jean was a jolly little thing, and full of fun. Everybody had a good word for her, and Jimmy could borrow a quarter from her 'most any day when he was short—which was often, he being a regular Bubba the Shuhite for shortness.

After The Elevator had got the office strained up to full concert pitch she had a talk with Jean—from which the latter returned flushed and angry.

"What's the trouble, Jean?" I asked.

"I won't tell you!" she snapped, and retired to her desk.

"Oh, come on!" I persisted. "If The Elevator has bothered you, I'll box her big ears!" This was an artful touch, for Miss Tomlin's ears were generous, to some degree—and I was very fond of Jean; indeed, especially so.

"She's a—a cat!" said Jean bitterly.

"What's up?" I insisted.

"She says," Jean broke out, "that I—that I—have got to wear high-necked waists! The cat!"

* * *

YE GODS!" I broke out, for I was mad, too. "You don't mean to say she thinks there's anything out of the way—"

"She says," Jean went on, mimicking her, "that Mr. Bunker 'would prefer that there should be no occasion for criticism in the costume of any employee.' Oh, she makes me sick!"

"Me, too," I agreed. "Just because she's a scrawny old—"

"Well—I can't give up my place, and

Mr. letting the nice satire of this go unanswered; "he's not the sort I'd expect to step over here and claim the lovely maiden. It's done by a naval ensign in musical comedy—and they stand together in the spotlight and sing about the beneficial effects of love."

"Were you ever serious?" queried Mr. Van Reypen.

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. Trotter. "I am frivolous. I'm sorry. We doped him—~~containing~~—Van. His—now I ought to have told her that villa was the Standard Oil office if I wanted to make a hit. The romance stuff was a bluff. We doped her out wrong. You never can tell about a woman."

"Oblige me," broke in Mr. Van Reypen, "by not making a song about it." He gazed for a time out over the city, while the squeak of the phonograph filled their ears. "Sandy, you were right," he said presently. "I'm not getting anywhere out here. I ought to go back to the States with you."

"Right-o!" cried Mr. Trotter. He tore the letter to the man in New York into bits and tossed them gleefully into a waste basket. "Right you are. When do we start?"

"Well—as soon as I can fix it up to have a successor appointed. Some other youth will have to come out here and show 'em, Sandy, in the name of Uncle Sam. I'm going back to the lights of the little town across from Brooklyn—back to the bunch on Forty-fourth street. And to some other things almost too sacred to mention—among them, a man's job."

Mr. Trotter seized him and dragged him forth for a walk under the stars. They passed down the narrow streets; the little shops receded, giving way to temples set in ancient groves; and finally they came to the open country. In the heart of Mr. Trotter was exultation; in that of Mr. Van Reypen was a chaos of feeling, out of which emerged, clearly, a longing for the great city of palm rooms and derby hats.

* * *

SEVERAL weeks later Mr. Van Reypen and Mr. Trotter stood on deck and watched the water front of Yokohama creep back to join the horizon. As they turned away to the smoking-room the man who had served his country spoke:

"Well, it's all over. That raw young graduate who's traveling toward the rising sun will have to answer the call of duty in my stead—I hope he answers it well. By Gad, Sandy, I'm glad you came. I'm glad I'm going home."

"Any gladness," Mr. Trotter assured him, "is mutual."

In the smoking-room, Mr. Van Reypen took from his pocket a fat, soiled letter, and tearing it open, read. Then he looked up with a smile.

"An amusing epistle, this," he said. "But from the heart, Sandy. It's from Yone Taisuka, a little Jap kid—I—or—helped. I tried to put him on to the curves of English a bit—and then I found out how horribly poor he was, and the

hopeless home he came from. So I got him a job with the Maxwell company. His gratitude was—or—I want to read you what he says. It isn't modest of me, maybe, but it's too good to miss. It seems he didn't get an accounting from his predecessor on the job, and when he should have been promoted, he wasn't. So he 'lost face.' Listen to his peroration:

I would like to see you leave and

man stood in a high-paneled library before Henry F. Meredith, head and moving spirit of one of the greatest department stores in New York. Mr. Meredith was the heavy, shrewd, financially ennobled brother of the frail, visionary little woman who had brought Mr. Van Reypen into the world. Through his uncle's money Mr. Van Reypen had been educated; through his uncle's influence he had gone to Japan; and, now he de-

clined man. He bowed his head a moment. "Sometimes I've been afraid you'd marry out there—one of these colorless hothouse girls with money, whose cash would be the end of a kid like you. I'd rather see you married to one of my own shop girls. But you—didn't—and you're back. And it's up to me once more, I suppose."

"It is—this far," said Mr. Van Reypen. "I want a job; I want a chance to make good—and then it's up to me."

"Do you mean to tell me," inquired Henry Meredith, "that you'll take a place in the store?"

"I'll take any place," explained the ex-patriot.

The old man's face lighted. He looked at the boy and opened his lips—then closed them. Then he actually smiled again, a pleasant smile.

"I'll fix it up with Mason tomorrow," he said.

Therefore, a few mornings later, Mr. Van Reypen, having answered the blatant summons of a 28-cent alarm clock, appeared at the Meredith store with what Sandy Trotter would have called his "shining morning face" aglow from a brisk walk downtown. Yes, amid 2,000 weary-eyed little girls, in shirtwaists and ready-made skirts, Bishop Van Reypen, late exquisite of the American consulate in a far Japanese city, appeared for work and took up his duties as assistant manager of the third floor.

And in the rush and bustle of this new world the gentler days in that picture book land became as a tale that is told. Into the mists of the past faded dinners and balls and receptions—what the beautiful Miss So-and-So said to the Bishop, and what the Bishop said to the English consul. Instead Mr. Van Reypen hurried about weird new duties—hurried amid girls who chattered constantly of last night, and tonight, and Jim and Joe—and forgot, as he hurried, that of late it had been upon him that his country called when dress clothes were to be worn, and repartee was to be exchanged, that the world might respect America.

Days grew into weeks, days that might be gray or gold without, but were all the same within—days through which maddened lady shoppers rushed in never-ending parade, days through which Mr. Van Reypen consulted, advised, and set many hearts a-flutter under cheap peek-a-boo waists. And though he little guessed it then, and would have laughed a well-bred laugh of scorn at the thought, she was there, up in the optical department. On the second day of his new life he had met her.

"I am Miss Blake—I assist Mr. Morton." Her eyes were big and gray and frank, lighting a face that was well worth while.

"Ah, yes—I am Mr. Van Reypen—the new assistant manager of the floor. If any difficulties arise—"

"Yes," she said. And she watched him as he moved away. "Don't make a fool of yourself." It was her mind that spoke, almost angrily, to her heart. And the heart meekly obeyed.

Then one day a difficulty did arise, and Mr. Van Reypen, recovered somewhat from the confusion of the first weeks,



—he sat again with her on the Maxwell balcony, while the moonlight fell silver on the roof tiles.

take your hand, but in place I must write. I would rather have been promoted, and I am sad. So I please not to come to you again until I am promoted, and can come to you with vigorous and triumphant mood of heart. Come to Japan twice, oh, my benefactor.

Mr. Trotter smiled.

"By Gad, you served some one besides Uncle Sam, didn't you?" he said.

"Oh, forget it," replied Mr. Van Reypen. "I only read it to you to give you a laugh."

"I know," said Mr. Trotter; "but what I am trying to get at is, when you think of that little brown chap, better off than he was before you came out here, there's no reason why you shouldn't go back to America with a vigorous and triumphant mood of heart."

"Perhaps not," said Mr. Van Reypen. "And if your highly moral reflections are ended, I'll trouble you for a match."

* * * * *

Six weeks passed, and Mr. Van Reypen

aired "a man's job," it was only natural that he should stand waiting once more in that gloomy room.

The old man ran his fingers through his gray hair and pondered. Then he proffered a cigar.

"Well," he said.

"I couldn't stand it any longer," explained Mr. Van Reypen. "I wanted to be back here—or—doing something, you know. I hope you're not angry."

Henry F. Meredith smiled—a rare feat.

* * *

NOT exactly," he said. "I wondered how long you could stand that pink tea out yonder. For you've got Meredith blood in you—I've been sure of that. And I've been praying that some day it would win out over the exquisite blue variety your mother brought into the family when she married an excellent name—and little else."

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. Van Reypen.

"I beg yours—I'm sorry," replied the

"So I suppose I can fix up something. But it's insulting!" And she sobbed.

"She can't insult you, my dear," I said affectionately. "The darned old—"

Here the door opened and Mr. Bunker came out, so I stopped, remembering that the tone of the office must be preserved. But when he was safely on his way home I resumed my talk with Jean, and finally consoled her into a fixed belief that nothing Miss Tomlins could say would very long postpone the day when we could carry out some plans neither she nor Mr. Bunker had any suspicions of—plans that lay very near our hearts.

So we consented to bear in silence the distressingly high tone of the office until the happy day came when we should give the whole thing the go-by, and wear such ties and shirtwaists as we chose.

I don't want to make this a love story, but you know how it is when a sweet little girl like Jean is abused, and you think there's nothing too good for her; and you console her, and cheer her up and tell her that the world's not good enough for her, and that some day you'll give her what she deserves.

Jean smiled again.

Meanwhile Miss Tomlins became more and more indispensable to the boss. Most of the business was transacted through her, and once Jimmy came out saying in an awe-stricken voice:

"Gosh! The old man called her Theressa!" Whereupon he retired to his desk and chewed gum in silent dismay.

So things went on for about two months. And then one day Theressa Tomlins was not at her usual place when the clock pointed to 8:45.

We thought she must have met with some serious accident. It was unheard of. Until it was 9 o'clock—the old man's hour—we wondered and discussed her absence in apprehensive tones, remembering how she had insisted that "tardiness in business was a form of thieving." But when Mr. Bunker arrived we should be compelled regretfully to report her absence.

He entered his office at once and rang his bell.

Jean went in and reported that Miss Tomlins had not appeared.

"Strange!" remarked Mr. Bunker. "You had better telephone her."

"What is her address?" asked Jean.

Mr. Bunker gave the address, and Jean came out and tried to call her up. Jean seemed to have some trouble in getting an answer.

I stood by and listened, and finally I heard Jean say:

"Gone? Without leaving any word?"

Then Jean's face changed as she heard the answer. It was half dismay

and half triumph that I saw in her expression.

"You say she's skipped her board bill?"

Then came a long answer, and Jean hung up the receiver.

"Oh, Victor," said Jean to me, "the little scamp has skipped out from her boarding-house, owing them a lot of money! And they don't know anything about her!"

When I came back I brought an expert, who went to work at the safe.

Meanwhile I saw that Bunker had been going over all his papers. He'd filled his waste basket with scraps and covered a large part of the floor with trash. And he seemed worried to death till the man had drilled the lock and opened the door of the safe.

Then—there wasn't much to see. When Bunker had unlocked the inner

But the office was busier than ever, as long as it lasted. Within a short time came creditors, clients, men with bills, the police, detectives—and it did not take us long to find out that Bunker had been skating on the thinnest kind of black ice.

He had collected all the cash he could get in, and was just about to make a clean getaway with it when his private secretary, The Elevator—who had so thoroughly raised the moral tone of the office—had in the nick of time outdone her thievish employer by collaring the bundle of swag just as it was nicely made up ready for transportation.

Seeing that the game was up, Bunker had skipped, too—and that was the end of the office.

But we found one pleasant incident in the whole transaction. When the office broke up we found that there was due Jimmy about \$25; to Jean Nisbet, a little more, and I lacked about \$150—on salary account.

About two weeks after The Elevator disappeared I received a package enclosing a letter and \$25. The letter read thus:

Somewhere in U. S.
A.—Dear Mr. Welles:
We don't rob the poor
—but only such old
scamps as that whited

sepulcher, Bunker. It made me sick to feel the rest of you. Give my best to Jimmy—who's a good pal! Hand the money around to the force according to what's owed them. And—if you can—marry that sweet Jean, who's a fine, straight girl, and count yourself lucky!

Wish I was like her. I was once.
Good-by forever.

THERESA TOMLINS.
Mr. Victor Welles,
Office of Bunker Bunker.

And that was the last we ever heard of Bunker or The Elevator, though Jean and I have watched the papers pretty closely. We found out later that the payment for The Elevator's board bill had been left hidden in her room, so the landlady didn't lose her money. Apparently, like Robin Hood, Smooth Sue did not rob the poor, but was after the dishonest rich—like our employer.

As to the money she left for us, we tried to hand it over; but all parties agree that we were entitled to it to balance what was owed us.

It certainly was a godsend (if I may put it that way), for Jean and I had been saving every cent so we could be married.

So we always had a grateful remembrance of The Elevator.

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I was reminded that "work must not be viewed from the standpoint of enjoyment."

"The deuce she has!" said I. "Well, when old Bunker hears—"

Just then the door of the inner office opened and the old man came out, looking decidedly fussed and worried. He came over to the telephone and asked us:

"Well—what did you hear?"

So I told him what we had heard; and he looked even worse, but made no comment. He hurried back into the office, forgetting to close the door, and we saw him working over his safe—apparently trying to get the combination. But in a few minutes he gave it up and came back to my desk.

"Welles," he said, "somebody must have changed the combination of the safe. I can't do anything with it. You don't know the combination, of course?"

"No, sir; Miss Tomlins was the only one who knew it."

"Damn Miss Tomlins!" he burst out angrily. "Here—you go and get a safe expert, and tell him to open this thing even if he has to do it with a sledge-hammer or dynamite! Go quick, too! I've got to see—"

Here he returned to his own room, and I left on a run.

compartment he found nothing inside except a scrap of paper on which was neatly written in blue pencil:

Good-by! I've got a good start!
THERESA, alias SMOOTH SUE.

That was all. And apparently it was enough.

Bunker looked at the paper a minute and turned gray. Then he held it out to the expert with shaking hand.

"What does that mean?" he asked.

"Smooth Sue?" said the expert. "Didn't you ever hear of her? She's one of a big gang. You've been robbed, that's all. She has cleaned out the safe and then changed the combination to gain time. She's one of the worst in that line. There's a reward out for her ever since that big trust company was robbed in Beckwith avenue."

The paper dropped to the floor.

"All right," said Bunker. "Send your bill in tomorrow. I'll not be back today."

And he picked up a switch from the corner and left the office without a word to any of us.

He did not return that day—not the next; nor any day.

sults by rule of supply and demand and expatriate on the increased cost of living, might have learned a great deal from Penelope.

Once upon a none too distant time Penelope was known as Marian, daughter of the general storekeeper in the self-same Iowa town. She now looked upon her nineteen years of existence back then as a butterfly might reflect upon its days in a coffinlike cocoon. The very moment she put the Hudson behind her and stepped aboard a Forty-second street cross-town car she realized the lure of Manhattan. She heard the voices in the roaring L trains, in the shuffle of numberless feet, and in the rattle of ceaseless traffic. Every face that looked into her own seemed to fairly shout:

"We've been waiting for you! We need you. We need you!"

Thus in the gradual process of evolu-

THE MAN BACK HOME

By Roland Ashford Phillips

Illustrated by F. McInelly

Marian was a stranger to the bright lights, but when the truth was finally forced upon her the boy back home was not the loser

and also on the painted side, who will not believe this.

Marian came to the region of brownstone fronts and white lights with a determination to shine with the host of other incandescent stars. She did not find it a difficult matter to get her dainty foot on the first round of the ladder. She did not live in musty hall bedrooms, so dear to the heart of story writers; no eagle-eyed landlady opened her mail, asked embarrassing questions, or sniffed

for stolen gas. Marian did not fry her breakfast egg over a smoky jet, nor smuggle crackers to her room under her jacket. Neither did she write home for money.

No managers insulted her, no stage door admirers annoyed her; after theater suppers were mysteries—something as intangible as highballs. She never smoked a cigaret or told suggestive stories. She never stayed up later than midnight, save on occasions of late re-

hearsals; and never, never had a member of the male sex, other than the bellboy, ever stepped into her immaculate little room at the Durrant Hotel.

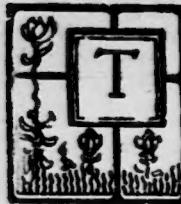
Every Monday night Penelope, with some fifty-odd others of the "Laughing Princess" company, received her salary. Her weekly envelope contained \$25. Five of that went in a letter each week to a little town somewhere in Iowa. She had \$20 remaining. Statisticians who search frantically through the ages, weigh re-

SERVING HIS COUNTRY

By Earl Derr Biggers

AUTHOR OF "LILACS AND COBBLESTONES," ETC.

Illustrated by F. McAnelly



THE important thing to remember about Mr. Bishop Van Reypen is that he served his country. Some men die for their native land, others dance for it. Mr. Van Reypen was of the latter contingent.

In the forefront of the most enervating cotillions he did valiant service for his flag. Where the afternoon tea raged fiercest there one found him bravely bearing an ice for some distinguished lady.

Through the daintiest of dinners, the lengthiest of receptions, his patriotism stood the strain.

Because of his uncle's influence Mr. Van Reypen had become attached to our consulate at a certain city in Japan. The duties allotted to him were purely social. He saw to it that his superiors never had to waltz. He was but one of an army of pleasant young men scattered over the globe in like service for the flag—young men who dream, as they change their pajamas for evening clothes, of some day being transferred to Paris.

Said Mr. Sandy Trotter, once Mr. Van Reypen's classmate at Yale, on the occasion of his only visit to Japan:

"I find you here in this comic opera country, dancing your heart out for the Stars and Stripes, and I'm touched, Van, touched. They'll all be proud of you when the news travels back home. Really, you're a hero. George Cohan ought to write a very flaggy musical comedy around you."

"Please don't jest on a sacred topic," returned Mr. Van Reypen from the window seat where he lay at rest. "I suppose it will strike you as funny to hear me say it, but, for a fact, all this has become a very serious business to me." He yawned with fervor. "There really is an idea somewhere at the back of my head that I'm doing something for my country. They think out here that we're all social barbarians—I'm teaching them different. I can outstare any Englishman in Japan, and while I can't bow so gracefully as What's-his-name at the French consulate, I'm watching him closely; and some day I'll bow him off the map. Seriously, it's a—er—a privilege to teach these scornful aliens that Americans can two-step, as well as sell agricultural implements. Sorry I couldn't play tennis with you today."

"What was it," inquired Mr. Trotter—"another afternoon with a very important and equally homely dowager?"

"A tea," said Mr. Van Reypen. "A tea with our British cousins, to meet their distinguished but fault finding brother from overseas. I'd rather have had the tennis—"

"I know," put in Sandy; "your country called. Far be it from me. Don't apologize."

"Tonight," Mr. Van Reypen announced, "is free. We'll take in a Japanese theater. You'll laugh yourself into a decline—probably over a tragedy. Now—"

"If you will pause in your yawning," said Mr. Trotter, "you might tell me what all this is leading to. It's all right to indulge in a two-stepping contest with the foreign powers; but—what do you get in the end? Where are you when the last carnation has faded? Tell me that."

Mr. Van Reypen crossed his legs and gazed at the ceiling.

"Well," he said reflectively, "it has been bruited about that from a similar post many men have—er—married well. I don't—er—I don't exactly approve of the idea, but if the girl were pretty I

Young Van Reypen wanted to be patriotic, even in matters of love—so why should he prevent his rival from going to war?

might be able to marry for love, and let the money come as an afterthought. I suppose I'm all sorts of a cad to say it—"

"You are," retorted Mr. Trotter promptly. His honest face was grave and troubled. "Better come back with me to the States. These pink teas have gone to your brain. Let some other handsome youth waltz your Uncle Sam into a world power. You could get a job—"

"Sandy," said Mr. Van Reypen, "what you suggest is madness. While little old Japan holds her, it is the land for me. You know whom I mean. The Jamieson girl—the one with the big brown eyes. One look into them—"

♦ ♦ ♦

YES," said Mr. Trotter meaningfully—

"the maiden with two million in her own name. I know."

"That, my dear old friend," advised Mr. Van Reypen, "is an afterthought. Kindly consider it always—an afterthought."

Mr. Trotter heaved his ex-football bulk out of his chair and paced the room. It was torture to behold a friend in the state of mind in which his patriotism had landed Mr. Van Reypen. He paused at the side of the window seat and, not wishing to look into the eyes of the man who lay there, stared at the quaint, pier-machetlike gables that cluttered all outdoors.

"Now, see here," he said. "I don't think you'd marry any girl for her money—"

Mr. Van Reypen sat bolt upright.

"See here," said the prospective sailor, "I won't have you baiting in!"

though she does go in for romance and the moonlight-falling-softly-on-the-ruined stuff a little too strong for me. She and I sat on the Methodist veranda—I can't remember all these missionary names—the other night, and she pointed to a small white building across the bay and had all sorts of thrills over it. It was so romantic looking, and an exiled poet might have dreamed there, and all that rot. I hadn't the heart to tell her it was the local office of the Standard Oil Company."

"I should say not," said Mr. Van Reypen. "It would have spoiled her entire evening. She is romantic. And that's good—it's my one precious ray of hope. Money doesn't mean everything to her. You should see the way she treats that rich little cad, Norris, who came all the way out from the States to see her. I tell you, she's the right sort. By Gad—say—" He leaped from the window seat, and ran to his desk. There he rummaged among papers, and presently held up a note, tragically.

"Did I say the theater tonight, old boy? Well, I'm dreadfully sorry—but there's a dinner to a funny little Jap doctor who's discovered a serum or something, and of course the U. S. has to be represented. If you'll excuse me—"

"Of course," said Mr. Trotter. He watched with scornful eye while Mr. Van Reypen answered the old, old call of his country. The jaw of the latter was set; resolutely he turned his thoughts from the possibilities of a pleasant evening with Sandy, wandering through quaint streets, amid quaint people. Resolutely

of the social set, and bravely does our little hero fight all night in the front ranks of the cotillion. Not until the retreat sounds—"

Mr. Van Reypen cast a pair of brushes at his friend and departed with no other farewell.

And that friend, breathing heavily above a slender writing desk, which seemed likely at any moment to collapse beneath his weight, wrote later in the evening to another man in far New York:

I don't know how it will end—I wish I could do something to make it end right. There always were the two sides to Van, and we all knew it was a gamble as to which side would win out. Sometimes he's a man all through—and then again he wants to loll on a divan, with a dusky little wizard to hand over the long, cool glass—and let him pay who will. This job out here—dancing in competition with a lot of gold-lace puppets—has just about finished him. He's on the verge of marrying a girl with money—and good by to him if he ever does that. I'd stop it if I could; but, well, it isn't any of my business, you know. And say, the funny part of it is he thinks he's doing something for his native heath when he trips the light fantastic on a foreign strand. Poor old Van. That will show you how far gone he is.

Mr. Trotter finished his letter to the man in New York and went over and gazed out at the tile roofs of the city, bright in the moonlight. Such a little, low, ridiculous cluster of a town—he felt that he could toss it into a heap with a turn of his foot, as he had tossed his sister's dollhouses in the nursery long ago. From a balcony across the way came the grating burr of a phonograph.

♦ ♦ ♦

EE, I wish I could do something," muttered the faithful Mr. Trotter. And at that moment the servant of his country returned from the fray, wailed and slow of step. He dropped wearily into the same window seat that had held him that afternoon.

"The war is over, mother," began Mr. Trotter, but Mr. Van Reypen quickly cut him off.

"Don't," he said simply, and there was that in his tone which brought Mr. Trotter's instant obedience.

"Sandy," he said presently, "what sort of fellow should you say this Norris is?"

"Well," returned Mr. Trotter, reflecting, "he has wined. I get that from the lovely crimson of his face. And he has dined. I get that from his waist line. Further than those things, he has not lived."

"Exactly," responded Mr. Van Reypen. "A cheap, contemptible little snob. His companionship is an insult."

"It is," said Mr. Trotter, "but I kept looking at the waist line and was comforted. Oh, avenging waist line! It's going to keep on pushing him farther and farther away from the Fifth avenue club window out of which he loves to gaze."

Mr. Van Reypen turned his eyes out toward the glittering roofs. "She's going to marry him," he remarked abruptly.

"Who is?" Mr. Trotter's eyes lighted. "Margaret Jamieson. She told me so herself a half hour ago, when we parted at the Maxwell's."

Mr. Trotter whistled softly. Inwardly he was elated; outwardly, sympathetic.

"It's too bad, Van," he said. "She's marrying him—for his money," accused Van Reypen bitterly.

"Confound the fellow," said Mr. Trot-



"You're correct," he said a bit angrily. "And I wouldn't take that insinuation from anyone but you. I'm in love, you old plow horse—in love. It's nice she has money—but it really doesn't matter, in the least. I'd be just as fond, anyhow. She's a wonder. Confound it, man, have you seen her?"

"I have," replied Mr. Trotter, "and well you should know it. You steered me into her company. Oh, she's all right,

he bathed; resolutely he fixed studs in a gleaming shirt; resolutely he climbed again into the carefully pressed suit of black. Mr. Trotter from time to time spoke words from the doorway.

"You remind me, Van, of the books in the prep school library. At the first call of the bugle Bish Van Reypen, the little drummer boy, leaped cheerily from his hard cot and donned his uniform. Soon we find him amid the weary-eyed soldiers

tion she became Penelope Warington. The fact was, Dickie suggested it first, and—

Dickie? Oh, Richard Blackdaw was a bright, clean-cut, smooth-faced broker who had an office in Wall street—as all good brokers do—and a finger on the pulse of the stock market—as all good brokers are supposed to have. Dickie had a finger in several pies, too, but these were never mentioned below Fourteenth street. Dickie was everything a gentleman should be, and to Penelope, dazzled by his elegance, he seemed a good fairy dropped from the skies. To other people he was other things.

Anyhow, on the very day that Marian Hall shyly advanced upon the big, bare stage where a chorus rehearsal was in progress, and asked a certain coquettish and hatless individual for a position, this latter person took in a deep breath, opened his eyes until they resembled saucers, swallowed awkwardly a few times, and then—telephoned Dickie.

It is perhaps well to mention right here that Marian Hall possessed more than ordinary attractiveness. The country sweetness fairly burned in her wide brown eyes and shimmered in her wealth of braided hair. Looking upon her cheeks, one instantly thought of apple blossoms. Her lips were stained by countless cherries. And when she smiled—well, to repeat that the stage director was amazed is the strongest proof possible to offer. Directors, as a rule, are immune from these sensations; but in this case Marian made an impression such as an iron fist might make in a slab of wet clay.

A position? Why, of course! She was just the type they had been searching for! No experience? Well, that didn't matter. Looks were of more importance. Girls who could sing and dance were plentiful; but girls of Marian's sort were few and far between.

Marian Hall was Marian Hall for three days after this; then the change came. Dickie, as has already been said, suggested Penelope Warington, and thus it went on the programs.

Dickie did a great deal more than that. In fact, had his presence been necessary on the exchange during those few busy weeks, the condition of the market would have been horrible to contemplate.

* * *

DICKIE made Penelope move to a hotel. Afford it? Why, certainly! A cute little room could be had for—well, it would only cost her \$5 a week! Just a trifle more than she would have to pay for a cheerless hall room in a brownstone front.

Anyway, Penelope was not posted as to rents in Manhattan. Why, her mother's best room at home was let out for \$8 a month.

It must be repeated that Penelope paid \$5 a week for her little room at the Durrant. This is to allay any and all suspicions in the minds of certain readers.

The room had an immaculate bath, the daintiest furniture, the softest ruga, and the most restful bed in all the world. It was the next best thing to a mother's arms. Clusters of hidden lights sprang into life at a touch. A shining button brought either maid or bellboy. A telephone made Penelope a next door neighbor to all of the city.

She found it cheaper and much more convenient to eat most of her meals in her room—breakfast at 11, dinner at 6. All she had to do was to sign the slip that came up on the tray. The bill was settled at the end of each week. They averaged 50 cents a meal. Penelope paid for her meals—paid 50 cents! Read that sentence again, and strangle any new suspicion.

Clothes? Dickie took her to a little place on Fifth avenue where—well, the prices were absurdly low. A most delli-

cate gown could be purchased for \$2—after Dickie had introduced her to the madame. And a cunning hat came to \$15. All the shopkeepers appeared to know Dickie, and made him extraordinary bargains.

Penelope's letters home—and they went twice weekly—contained all the news, even to the most minute detail. Here was another time-worn tradition shattered. She told her mother everything.

Penelope was a good girl. She could not have been better had she been at

Glory at the curb. In this one respect the car resembled its owner—it could wait!

"Why not a little bite to eat tonight?" Dickie asked. "I'm lonely! We can go to some quiet place. You can be back in the hotel before 1 o'clock. Just this once, please!"

Penelope hesitated. It is a sort of hesitation that comes to all of us soon or late. Surely there could be no harm in dining with a man in a brightly lighted restaurant! Besides, she was hungry.

The machine whirled them through the

fall air. A vague, intangible something had come between them.

Back in her little room at the hotel Penelope took the picture of Jim Parks and set it before her on the dressing table. Jim was the dark-eyed fellow who had carried her books in the school days who had danced with her at the parties who kissed her that day when she left the little red station for New York. He would always wait for her.

* * *

WITH the approach of warmer weather the audiences who paid real money to witness "The Laughing Princess" dwindled away. The notice followed, and then the closing. Somehow Penelope had not prepared herself for this ordeal. She had imagined this particular princess merrily wending her way forever.

When she left the stage door for the last time she had just \$40 saved. This she tucked reflectively back into her bag

and started engagement hunting.

There were several summer reviews opening—some of the girls had mentioned this—and so she promptly made application for a position. Strange as it may appear, her quest was fruitless.

After a week of this Penelope had \$35 and a bad case of blues. One day on Broadway she met a former principal of "The Laughing Princess." During the course of their conversation Penelope mentioned her lack of a position. The other was plainly surprised.

"But Mr. Blackdaw— you haven't fallen out, have you? You and he are still friends?"

"Yes," Penelope nodded.

"Well, I should think he'd fix you up with some of the summer shows, then," the other resumed.

"Fix me up?" Penelope ventured curiously. "Why, how could he? Besides, I wouldn't think of asking such a favor," she added.

"A favor? Why, it's understood, isn't it, that you—"

"Please," Penelope interrupted, her cheeks coloring. "I think you must be mistaken about Mr. Blackdaw and myself. He has been very kind to me, that is all. And as for doing anything for me—why, that is entirely out of the question!"

The other woman laughed quite frankly.

"My dear little girl, I wasn't born yesterday. You live at the Durrant, don't you? And that gown you have on came from Lucile's, didn't it? I've bought gowns there and I know. It couldn't have cost a cent under a hundred!"

Somehow Penelope left the woman and walked dazedly up Broadway to Forty-eighth street before being in full control of her senses. Her quick breath seemed to hurt her throat. After a struggle she turned and walked back to her cross-street, then on into the hotel.

At the desk, observing a new clerk on duty, a sudden determination gripped her heart. She asked for her key.

"What is the best rate you can make a friend of mine for a room similar to the one I have?" She scarcely recognized her voice.

"By the week?"

"Yes, by the week."

"Twenty dollars is the regular rate," the clerk answered without hesitation.

Penelope steadied herself by holding to the marble edge of the long desk.

"There—there is no lower rate?"

"None whatever!"

All the afternoon Penelope remained in her room. Toward evening, when she came down into the lobby, she carried only the little shabby suitcase she had brought from home. Everything else she left in the room. She handed the key to the clerk and stepped bravely out into the twilight.

Clutched in her cold fingers were several banknotes. They totaled \$33. Sacrificing a Pullman, it was just enough to get her back to the little town in Iowa and Jim.



A position? Why, of course! She was just the type they had been searching for!

home in the little attic bedroom under the eaves, where, although she never admitted it in New York, she watched the big apple tree burst into blossom at least nineteen times.

She was wrapped up in her "art," as all chorus girls should be, but otherwise she was different from many of them. Her companions sometimes interested her, sometimes amazed her, and not infrequently shocked her. She heard many things in the dressing-room that were beyond her understanding, but, fearing to show her ignorance, she did not ask questions.

If Dickie took her for an afternoon spin in his big car, which was often, he also took leave of her in the hotel lobby. Never by word or action had Dickie offended her. She never allowed him to give her a present. In this she was following out the advice given by her mother—and one other.

Richard Blackdaw was a broker who bought stocks after careful and mature deliberation, and was content to wait patiently until the market was in a proper shape in order to dispose of them. Dickie's supreme possession was his patience. With a certain end in view, and all things running in well-oiled grooves, he was satisfied to let matters complete their course. Other men might have been impatient, might have attempted to unload on an unresponsive market—thereby ruining everything. With Blackdaw it was a waiting game. Every move he made was deliberate and carefully planned in advance. He was nothing if not systematic.

One night, when Penelope came out of the stage door—it was only two blocks from her hotel, and she always walked—Dickie met her, his big car chugging pa-

inaze of white lights and cluttered traffic, up a side street, and finally stopped before the door of a little cafe.

Dickie evidently knew the head waiter, for a cosy table was given them in a corner. The room was alive with murmurs and laughter; the music was a fascinating background for all the light and color. Penelope took in a deep, deep breath, and felt the warm blood throb in either temple. Dickie had such a wonderful way of talking. Before she knew it she was leaning forward, listening to every word. Her simple mind did not seem able to record all the impressions swiftly enough; one came and merged into the next, until finally everything was blurred.

The waiter came and tiptoed away. Afterward, when she looked down beside the lighted candles, Penelope saw a fragile, slender-stemmed glass there, filled with an enchanting, greenish-hued liquid.

"Don't be afraid," Dickie was saying. "It is the usual thing, and—"

* * *

PENELOPE'S pulses were pounding in her ears like minute-drums. Her hands trembled so violently as to spill some of the liquid over them. With a quick laugh she reached into her bag for a handkerchief. In doing so her fingers touched and fumbled at an oval frame. It came out with a bit of linen. Dickie saw the picture it inclosed.

"Who is that?" he asked sharply.

"It's—it's the man back home," she faltered, and then, suddenly, her voice tremulous: "Please—I don't want to stay here any longer!"

For the first time since their meeting Penelope saw Dickie's mouth tighten. For the first time since their meeting she

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